SECT. VIII.—ON THE EVIL EFFECTS PRODUCED BY A CONDEMNING CONSCIENCE.

The sad effects that follow from a falsely approving conscience, producing a self-deceived, self-satisfied temper of mind, have already been pointed out. We are now to contemplate the evil effects which originate in a condemning conscience. These are greater and more numerous than the superficial observer is apt to imagine. Their source lies deep down in the human heart, and is therefore unseen, but is on that account the more tremendously powerful.

We are inclined to refer much of the discontent which abounds in the world to the influence of an unsatisfied conscience. As repeated neglects of duty pass under the notice of the mind, there is a wretchedness ever renewed, though very possibly without the individual being at all aware of the source from which it springs. In this respect it resembles the constant uneasiness produced by the derangement of the digestive organs, or the irritation caused by a diseased nervous system. The reproaches of the conscience, though individually transient, exercise, by their recurrence, a powerful influence. They resemble those noxious ephemera which make up in number what they want in strength; and while the individuals perish, the species survives. By their constant renewal they disturb the flow of association in the mind, and dispose it to anxiety and fretfulness.

An accusing conscience must thus ever be rendering the possessor restless and unhappy. We refer to this cause much of what we call temper, both of peevish and violent temper. True, the individual may not know the quarter from which the restlessness which he feels proceeds—nay, he may be inclined to trace it to every other source rather than the true one. He thinks that it arises from his condition, and hence his

constant endeavours to better his position, to free himself from certain external inconveniences, and to attain certain temporal privileges; or he refers it to the ill usage which he receives from mankind in general, or from certain individuals who have thwarted, envied, or insulted him, and hence his irritability or the obstinacy of his temper. He may not be aware of it—nay, he might scout at the idea, if propounded to him; but nevertheless it is certain